

January 17, 2012

To all members of the House Oversight, Reform, and Ethics Committee,

On behalf of the over 5,000 public school employees from fourteen school districts in Macomb County and two districts in Wayne County represented by the MEA/NEA Local 1 and the 6-E Coordinating Council, I am here to testify that we oppose the passage of the following bills-

HB 5023-(Lyons)-Labor; public service labor disputes; classes of public employees subject to penalties for engaging in a prohibited strike; expand. *This bill assigns fees so excessive, that should any public service union go on strike, the fines would bankrupt the union within a month.

HB 5024-(McMillin)-Labor; fair employment practices; remedies for mass picketing; modify. *This bill essentially ends the ability for any union to strike. With no ability to strike ever, unions are reduced to being a fraternal organization or an advisory club whose suggestions will be ignored at will by employers. The employer can easily call for an injunction and the fines assessed will destroy any unions' ability to exist within a month.

HB 5025-(Poleski)-Labor; hours and wages; employer deduction of union membership dues from wages; require annual written consent of employee. *This bill is designed to mimic the union busting tactic in Wisconsin that essentially forces every union to fight for its existence every year. The goal is to create another obstacle that will make being in a union so difficult and cumbersome that the union will cease to exist.

HB 5026-(Price)-Labor; notices; notice requirements in advertising for replacements for striking workers; repeal.

423.253a Strikes or lockouts; solicitation or advertisement for employees, referrals, notice.

Sec. 3a.

No person, partnership, agency, firm or corporation, or officer or agent thereof, shall recruit, solicit or advertise for employees, or refer persons to employment, in place of employees involved in a lawful strike or lockout, without adequate notice to the person, and in the advertisement, that there is a strike or lockout at the place at which employment is offered and that the employment offered is in place of employees involved in the strike or lockout.

*If this section is repealed, this bill will allow for the advertisement of strikebreakers. Again, the intent is to help destroy unions by allowing strikebreakers to easily be recruited.

All of the bills are designed to help destroy unions, especially public sector unions. As the President of MEA/NEA Local 1 and the 6-E Coordinating Council, I am speaking for my members when I say that we oppose any bills that would end our ability to serve our members in the best interests of public education.

Rather than destroying the collective bargaining rights of public sector unions all at once as was done by the majority Republican legislature in Wisconsin in 2011 and attempted by the majority Republican legislature through SB5 in Ohio; these bills are part of the Michigan majority Republican legislature's

strategy to severely weaken public sector unions through dozens of bills, passed slowly over the course of two years. However, the ultimate effect of these bills, if passed, is to effectively end collective bargaining for public sector workers in Michigan forever.

Union membership was at its peak from 1945 until the early 1980's in Michigan where union membership in the workforce approached 40%. Those years saw Michigan and the U.S. at its peak as the wealthiest, most powerful nation in the world. Michigan was one of the wealthiest states in the country with a large middle and working class that enjoyed good pay, benefits, and retirement plans.

Today, after three decades of outsourcing manufacturing jobs, private sector unions in Michigan have been decimated and now make up less than 9% of Michigan's workforce. Wages for everyone in Michigan are at an all-time low when adjusted for inflation. Benefits, if any, are dramatically reduced with huge co-pays for employees. Good pensions have been mostly eliminated and replaced with 401K's where retirees hope and pray they don't retire in a year that looks like 2008 and they lose half of their retirement earnings. Of course, if you have a pension, it will be taxed.

Now, it seems that this legislature has decided that it's time for public sector unions to be decimated and for public sector worker's pay, benefits, and retirement plans to be dramatically reduced, as well. Michigan's majority Republican legislature seems to believe that any rights associated with collective bargaining must be eliminated or severely curtailed. Of course, with privatization and cutbacks, public sector workers are being told they are lucky to have any job at all.

Finally, these bills are strictly punitive and do nothing to improve public education, create jobs, or improve the lives of the people of Michigan.

Sincerely,

John Duffy

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